

Alumni of the Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

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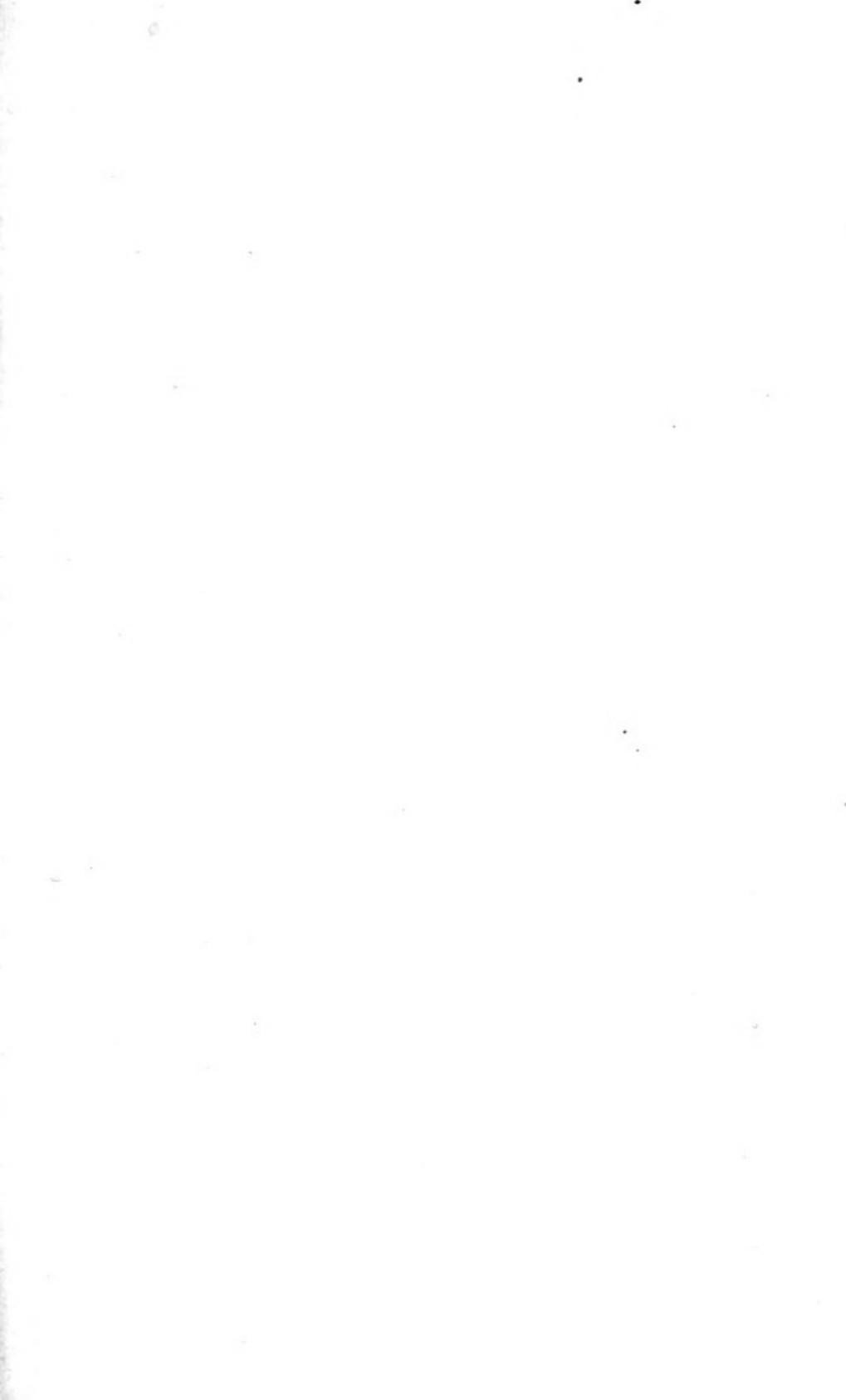
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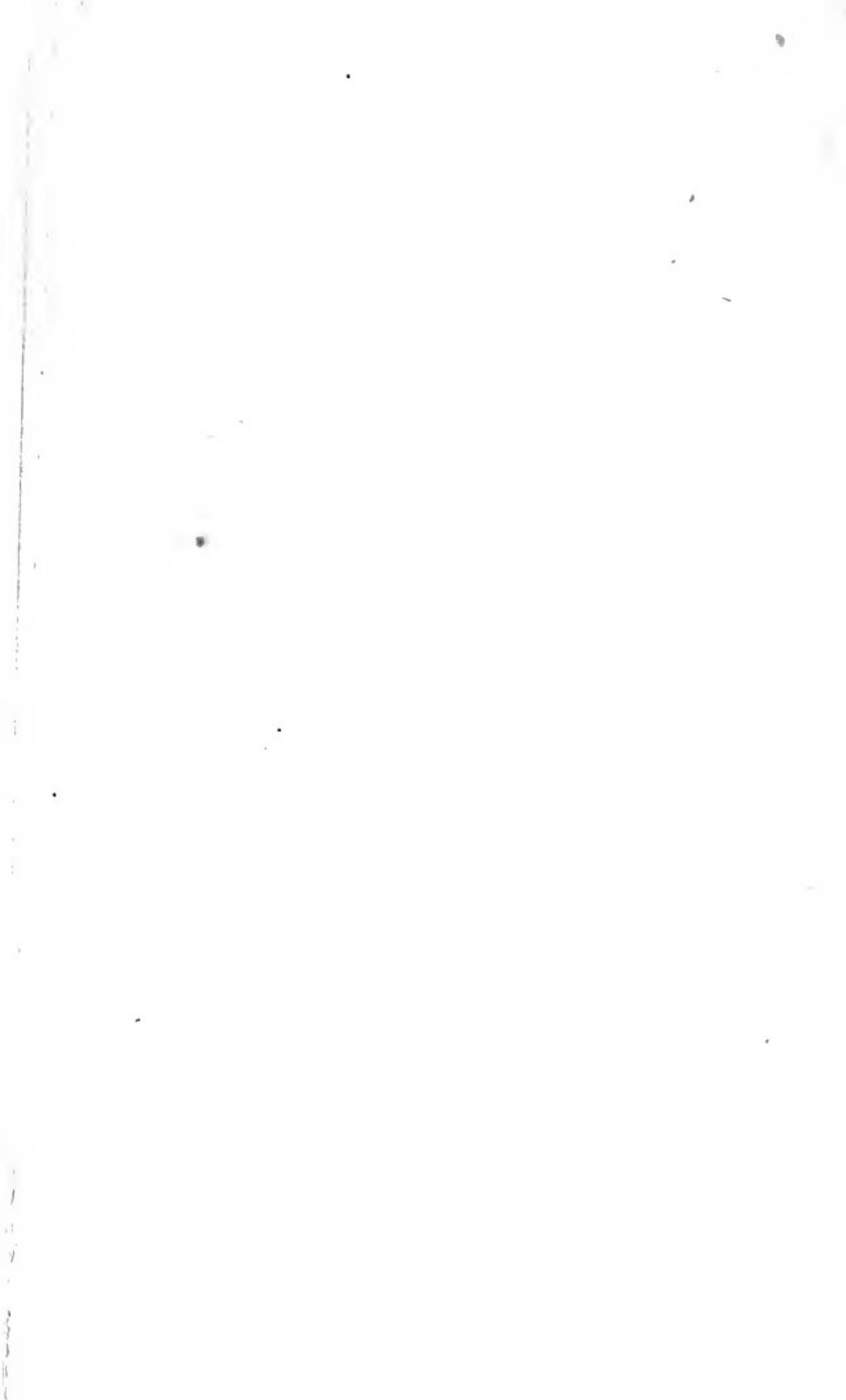
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Divine law of beneficence.







THE
DIVINE LAW OF BENEFICENCE ;

ZACCHEUS,

OR

THE SCRIPTURAL PLAN OF BENEVOLENCE ;

AND

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH,

OR

SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE.



ZACCHEUS;
OR,
THE SCRIPTURAL PLAN
OF
BENEVOLENCE.

✓
BY REV. SAMUEL HARRIS,
CONWAY, MASS.

And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.—LUKE 19:8.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PLAN PRESCRIBED IN THE BIBLE, -----	5
-------------------------------------	---

CHAPTER II.

PRINCIPLES WHICH GUIDE IN REDUCING THE SCRIPTURAL PLAN TO PRACTICE, -----	13
--	----

CHAPTER III.

THE DUTY OF SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE INFERRRED FROM THE NATURE AND MOTIVES OF PIETY, -----	19
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

SUPERIOR EFFICIENCY OF SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE IN PROVIDING FUNDS FOR BENEVOLENT ENTERPRISES, 25	
--	--

CHAPTER V.

TENDENCY TO SECURE GOD'S BLESSING ON BUSINESS AND TO ENLARGE THE MEANS OF GIVING, -----	37
--	----

CHAPTER VI.

THE ANTIDOTE OF COVETOUSNESS, -----	49
-------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

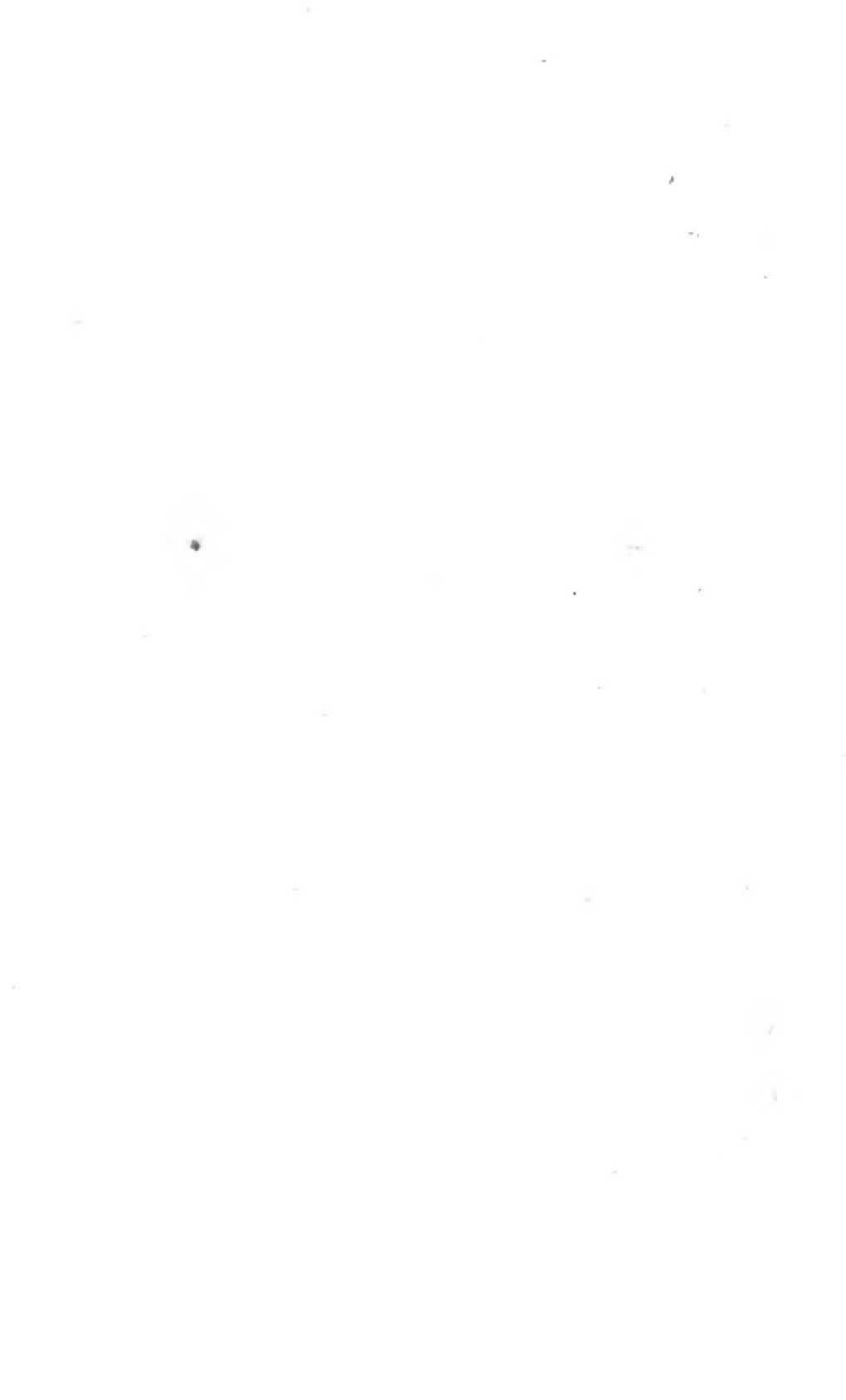
ESSENTIAL TO THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENTS, 61	
--	--

CHAPTER VIII.

INCREASES THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF THE CHURCH, 71	
---	--

CHAPTER IX.

PROMOTES HAPPINESS, -----	74
---------------------------	----



SCRIPTURAL PLAN OF BENEVOLENCE.

CHAPTER I.

PLAN PRESCRIBED IN THE BIBLE.

THOUGHTFUL readers cannot but observe the importance ascribed in the Bible to acts of charity; the boldness with which the inquirer for salvation is commanded, "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor;" the preëminence in deadliness assigned to the love of money as "the root of all evil;" the earnestness and frequency with which men are warned of its perils, and of the absolute incompatibility of serving God and mammon; the elevation given to the standard of benevolence, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;" and the vital connection everywhere implied between alms-giving and the highest attainments of piety, of spiritual power, and spiritual joy. They cannot but be startled, sometimes, with the apprehension that there is a strange contrast here between the Bible and the church; that the faithful applying of scriptural truth on this point, might make many a professed disciple

go away, like the young ruler, sorrowful, or cry, as they did of old when Christ had been preaching on this very subject, "Who then can be saved?" And they cannot but be justified in inferring that this very contrast between the church and the Bible is a prominent cause of embarrassment in our benevolent enterprises; of the prevailing worldliness of Christians; the limited success of efforts for the conversion of souls; the fewness of those who enter into the deepest experience of the spiritual life; and the absence of that rapidity of enlargement and energy of action which marked the apostolic church.

But the Bible not only teaches the importance of charity, it lays down principles systematizing it. To secure its divinely appointed prominence in advancing the enterprises, the piety, the power, and the blessedness of the church, it is necessary to understand and to practise the divinely appointed plan of SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE.

"UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK LET EVERY ONE OF YOU LAY BY HIM IN STORE, AS GOD HATH PROSPERED HIM."

This requires that charitable appropriations be *systematic*. It requires some plan, deliberately and prayerfully adopted, assessing on the income a determinate proportion for charitable purposes. It forbids giving merely from impulse, as under the excitement of an eloquent charity sermon, or the accidental sight of distress. It forbids giving merely at random what

happens to be convenient. It transfers the control of charity from the capriciousness of sensibility and the parsimony of convenience, to the decisions of reason and conscience. It regulates impulse by principle. It brings the whole subject into the closet, to be determined by prayer and deliberation, according to the rules of the Bible, in the fear of God, and the spirit of consecration to him. In carrying into effect the plan thus deliberately adopted, charitable appropriations will enter into the calculations as much as the necessary expenditures on the person, the family, or the business ; they will be managed with as systematic exactness as any branch of business ; they may with advantage be as regularly booked. A line written on a memorandum of his charities, kept by a systematic giver and found after his death, suggests an important reason for keeping such a record : "I keep this memorandum lest I should think I give more than I do."

They who obey the scriptural rule of benevolence, *do not wait to be solicited*. Like the impoverished but liberal Macedonians, they are "willing of themselves." If a way of conveying their gifts is not at hand, they seek one out, as Paul describes the Macedonians : "praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." Thus, according to the inspired plan, the urgent solicitation is not on the part of the agent of benevolence to draw

charity from the giver, but on the givers' part to find the agent to receive and disburse their charities. Let this system be adopted, and the funds of benevolent societies would flow in unsolicited, and the expense of collecting agencies would cease.

The scriptural rule requires *frequent and stated* appropriations. "On the first day of the week, let every one lay by him." If it is allowable sometimes to depart from the letter of this law, the spirit of it must be regarded. Having adopted his plan of giving, the giver is required at frequent and stated times to examine his income, assess on it the prescribed proportion, and set aside the amount sacred to benevolence. His appropriations must be *frequent*, to keep pace with his earnings and with the constant calls of benevolence; *stated*, that they may not be forgotten. This is inconsistent with giving a large sum, and then for a long time nothing, and with the intention of giving only or chiefly at death.

The text cited requires that charities be *proportionate to the income*. In the laws regulating the Jewish tithes and offerings, God prescribed precisely what proportion should be given. This was practicable in a system of laws for a single agricultural people, among whom every family was entitled to an inalienable inheritance in the soil; but the gospel, designed for all nations and ages, could not with equity fix the precise proportion. And it fits the en-

tire character of the gospel—free grace from God, free love from man—to leave the decision of this point to the unconstrained love of those who have freely given all to Christ; for “God loveth a cheerful giver.” But the principle by which the proportion to be given is determined, is most explicitly stated. “Let every one lay by him in store, *as God hath prospered him.*” Nothing can satisfy God’s claim less than a consecration to benevolence of an amount proportioned to the prosperity God has given. Do you think yourself benevolent because you give something—much? If you give less than “according as God hath prospered you,” yours is but the benevolence of Ananias and Sapphira.

This principle of proportionate benevolence is repeated in various forms in the Bible. “If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth.” “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” “As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men.” “I am debtor” to put forth benevolent efforts “as much as in me is.” “Honor the Lord with the first-fruits of all thine increase.” There are three points in this requirement of benevolence proportioned to the income.

1. *All must give.* “Let *every one.*” The gospel does not release the poor from giving. The smallest income can pay a proportion. Nothing

short of the total cessation of God's gifts can exempt from the law, "As God hath prospered him." The Macedonian church were praised for giving in "their deep poverty." The story of the widow's two mites settles for ever the acceptableness to God of offerings from the poor. And one dollar thus given, has often a moral power greater than a thousand. The benevolence of Louisa Osborn the colored domestic, who, from the wages of one dollar a week, paid twenty dollars a year to educate a youth in Ceylon, as it has been brought to light by the missionary who witnessed the unusual benefits of her donation to the mission, has thrilled the hearts of American Christians. The widow's two mites, which were all her living, lifted to the gaze of the universe and illuminated by the Saviour's commendation, have exerted and will exert a power which no mine of gold can equal—as if a dew-drop, expending its whole being to refresh one tiny flower, had been transformed, as it exhaled to the skies, into a star, and fixed in the brightness of the firmament to bless the creation for ever.

2. Donations should *increase with the increase of ability to give*. "As God hath prospered him." This requires the rich to give proportionally to their increasing wealth, though, in order to do it, they must give thousands of dollars where they used to give one. And these great donations are not to be regarded as specially praiseworthy, more than small-

er gifts which cost as great sacrifice and are proportionally as much. In both cases the giver has but "done what it was his duty to do."

3. *The rich must give a larger proportion of their income than the poor.* A poor widow with a helpless family cannot give a tenth of her earnings without taking bread from her children. Will any imagine that a man who has wealth, or even a competency, is required to give no larger a proportion of his income than that widow? A poor laborer may be subjected to more inconvenience by giving five dollars, than a man of wealth by giving five thousand. Hence, the greater a man's wealth, the larger must be the proportion of income which he gives. Hence the propriety of a rule adopted by Mr. N. R. Cobb, a merchant of Boston: to give from the outset *one quarter* of the net profits of his business; should he ever be worth \$20,000, to give *one half* of the net profits; if worth \$30,000, to give *three quarters*; and if ever worth \$50,000, to give *all* the profits. This resolution he kept till his death, at the age of 36, when he had already acquired \$50,000, and was giving all his profits.

Different individuals, who have aimed at systematic benevolence, have come to different conclusions as to the proportion which they ought to give; and, perhaps, each one to a correct conclusion, in his particular circumstances. Zaccheus gave *half* of his goods to the poor, besides restoring fourfold his unjust

gains. The first converts at Jerusalem, to meet their peculiar circumstances, sold their possessions and made distribution of the avails, as every man had need. Paul repeatedly intimates that he had suffered the loss of all things. Others have adopted plans similar, in the main, to that of Mr. Cobb, already cited. Others, after paying what has been needful for a most economical support, have given all their income. John Wesley is an example. "When his income was £30 a year, he lived on £28, and gave away £2; the next year his income was £60, and still living on £28, he had £32 to give. The fourth year raised his income to £120, and steadfast to his plan, the poor got £92." Others, again, have given a tenth of the gross amount of their receipts.

Such is the scheme of Christian beneficence devised in heaven and enjoined by inspired wisdom. Let every man consider that in neglecting it, he sets at naught the authority and the wisdom of God. Men may deride it; and so it is written of one of our Lord's many discourses on the right use of property, "The Pharisees, *who were covetous*, heard these things, and they derided him."

CHAPTER II.

PRINCIPLES WHICH GUIDE IN REDUCING
THE SCRIPTURAL PLAN TO PRACTICE.

WE now suppose that the child of God, convinced that the foregoing is the scriptural plan of beneficence, has retired to his closet solemnly to adopt this plan, and to determine the details of its application to himself. We direct his attention to three principles which should guide him.

1. *The aim of all business must be to glorify God.* This aim must give simplicity and unity to the entire life. Property is to be sought, not as the chief end, but as a means of doing good. The Christian is not to ask, "What part of my income shall I consecrate to God's service?" By the very act of becoming a Christian, he consecrated ALL to God's service in doing good. He has only to ask what part he must devote to this particular way of serving God—charitable gifts—in order that his whole property may accomplish most for God's glory. He is to remember, that the same principle is to regulate every step in the conduct of business, every new enterprise, every investment, every expenditure; that he is not at liberty to appropriate a dollar in any way, except as he can see that by so appropriating it he can do most to glorify God. He is not to think of setting aside a certain proportion for God, and do-

ing what he pleases with the rest ; he is to devote all to God's service, and expend, invest, or give it, in such proportions as will effect most for that end.

The law of systematic benevolence, therefore, does not forbid spending money on ourselves, educating children, laying aside something for the future. It does not forbid acquiring property ; we may make the five pounds, ten. We are even required so to do, serving God in the act ; "not slothful in business, serving the Lord." But no act of acquiring or spending money can be justified, unless it appears that by it most can be accomplished for God's glory.

The Bible everywhere exhibits business as wholly subservient to this great end. "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God." It teaches that Christians are stewards, having nothing but the talents which God has intrusted to them to be increased for him. The requirement, "Sell that ye have and give alms," the similar direction given by Christ to the young ruler, cannot mean less than that all worldly business and possessions are to be entirely subservient to doing good.

Benevolence, then, must be not only systematic, but systematizing, pervading and regulating the whole business. How is it possible to be seeking first the kingdom of God, when, practically, the controlling aim of all the transactions of business is to make money ; when giving to the treasury of the Lord

is only occasional and secondary, seldom occupying the thoughts ; called forth, perhaps, only by solicitation ; trifling, it may be, in amount ; and determined only by the impulse or convenience of the moment ? It is as if the steward of an estate should devote its income to himself, making only an occasional and trifling gift to the family of the absent owner, nay, leaving its members to suffer without caring for their wants. It is reversing the sentiment of the humble suppliant, "The dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table," and giving the crumbs to the master, while the dogs eat at the table.

In view of this principle, let the Christian decide what part of his income the promotion of God's glory and the advancement of his cause require him to expend on himself and his family, what part to invest, what part to give.

2. The Christian will recognize the duty of *self-denial*. Does he say, "I give all that is convenient?" This language has widely different meanings on different lips. Some do not find it *convenient* to dispense with the most costly, or even the most hurtful luxuries. Some do not find it *convenient* to give half as much in a year as they spend on a single article of luxury, or in the indulgence of a single pernicious habit. The Bible does not say, "Do good as much as is convenient," but, "as much as in you is." The necessity of self-denial is too plainly revealed to allow the thought that the scriptural

law of benevolence can be obeyed without it. It is not only reiterated in direct commands, but is woven into all the inspired teachings respecting the Christian life. The spirit that breathed on the cross is presented as the spirit which must breathe through the whole church. If the church is “the body of Christ,” Christ’s heart beats within it, sending to the remotest limb the throbings of its own love. He who is not thus “in Christ,” and imbued with his self-sacrificing love, is none of his. The Christian, then, must make his appropriations to charity in the spirit which says, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”

Here, however, every Christian is left to the decision of his own mind, guided by the rules and animated by the love of Christ. The following fact shows Wesley’s practice: “In 1775 the Accountant-General sent him a copy of the excise order for the return of plate: ‘Rev. sir, as the commissioners cannot doubt but you have plate for which you have hitherto neglected to make entry, etc.’—to which he wrote this memorable answer: ‘Sir, I have two silver tea-spoons at London, and two at Bristol. This is all the plate which I have at present, and I shall not buy any more while so many around me want bread.’” Normand Smith of Hartford, deeming his house too expensive to be consistent with his rules of Christian benevolence, determined to sell it. An account was published in the newspapers a few years

since of a man who lived in a garret, on bread and water, that he might have the more to give. The writer knows a minister and his wife who lived without many of the comforts of life, for the same object. Admit that some have gone to an extreme. But is not this nobler and more acceptable to God, than to go to the extreme of indulging self, without any denial? And where one goes to an extreme in this direction, are there not thousands in the churches who have never learned by experience what self-denial is? And which is most like Him who had not where to lay his head? As to the extent to which self-denial must be carried, "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" as to its necessity to full compliance with the scriptural rule of benevolence, let every one heed the Saviour's words, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." And it is to be supposed that the rich are not excused from the duty, nor debarred from the privilege, more than the poor.

3. The Christian will regard his charities, however great, as the *discharge of an obligation*. The right to give or withhold at pleasure belongs to God alone. To his creatures God says, "Ye are not your own;" and emphatically to his ransomed children, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." The very beginning of the religious life is an act of entire consecration to God. The Christian's profession is a constant proclamation to the world, that the

claim of Him who bought him with his blood, covers his estate, his faculties, his all. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Therefore, ransomed sinner, whatever thou givest, thou dost but "render unto God the things that are God's." So Paul felt: "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians." But why a debtor rather than a giver? Because he was not his own, but bought with a price. So are we all debtors to the ignorant, the wretched, and depraved of whatever nation; and when we pay into the Lord's treasury for their benefit, must say, "Oh Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own." Hence the terrible declaration of God—not against those who gave nothing, but against those who gave what was of inferior value—"Ye have robbed God."

CHAPTER III.

DUTY OF SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE INFERRED FROM THE NATURE AND MOTIVES OF PIETY.

PIETY begins with *a change of heart*. The greater part of life is usually occupied with the acquisition and use of property. A change of heart, if real, cannot leave this principal part of life unaffected. The subject of it must be expected to show that he has found a more valued treasure in heaven by his new aims in getting, his new principles in using the treasures of this world. If, in that chief part of life occupied with gaining and using property, the professed subject of a change consisting in placing the affections on things above, continue to show the same estimate of property as the great end to be sought, the same eagerness in getting, the same tenacity in holding, the same self-seeking in using it, need it be surprising that his worldly competitors doubt the reality of the change? Must not Christ repel such professors with his own searching question, "What do ye more than others?" There is nothing less than absurdity in the idea of a change, in which the man becomes "a new creature in Christ," in which "old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new," which yet does not carry a new spirit through the business and consecrate the property as

well as the heart to God—in which the theory is all for the glory of God ; the practice, all for making money.

Religion is love. And love is active. It is as natural for love to act beneficently, as for a fountain to flow, or a star to shine ; and its action is ungrudging, unstinted, delighting in toil for the loved object. Witness, for instance, the toils of parental love. Can love to God and man be the very essence of the character, while beneficent efforts are left to hazard, crowded into the by-corners of life, supplied by chippings and remnants ? Can love control the heart, and not control the action of the life ?

Christians are laborers together with God. God is always giving : if we labor with him, we must labor in his work ; we must give. God is love ; if we labor with him, we must labor in the work of love. God would form us into his likeness ; to this end, we are no sooner brought into his kingdom, than we are put to doing his work. In revealing his will by inspired men, in the conversion of every soul, in the whole work of spreading the gospel through the world, we discover this sublime partnership in labor between God and his children.

Behold, then, believer, your sublime position, working with God in delivering the world from ruin. To reclaim men to holiness is God's great work ; to it he has moulded his plans, and for it ordered his providence, since time began. May you be a laborer with

God, and make that secondary which he regards as first ; pursue without plan, energy, or steadfastness, the object which he seeks with a steadfastness which knows no abatement, a zeal which spares no sacrifice, an outpouring of treasure which arithmetic cannot calculate ? A laborer with God, and yet that object to which with him the destiny of nations and the movements of heavenly hosts are subordinate, be with you secondary to money-getting, to furniture, equipage—a mere appendix to business ? Let the great fact possess your soul with the fulness which its reality demands, that you are a laborer together with God, and you will lose sight of self in the greatness of man's salvation, and instead of beneficence being an appendix to business, business itself will become but a means of beneficence.

The cross of Christ urges to systematic benevolence. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” This is one of the most touching appeals to Christ's sufferings. Yet Paul wrote it expressly as a motive for taking up a charitable collection at Corinth. This beautiful sentiment in such a connection may seem sadly out of place to those who are wont to regard a charitable collection as an annoyance ; but it shows the apostolic view of the connection of this duty with all that is sublime and affecting in the cross of Christ.

The peculiar motive of Christianity is expressed in the affecting words so often on the lips of Jesus, "For my sake." "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, for my sake"—"hated of all men for my sake"—"hath left houses and lands for my sake"—"loseth his life for my sake." He presents this motive as effectual to induce the greatest sacrifices, even of property and life. And it would seem that a sinner, pardoned through Christ's blood, could not, for very shame, lift his eye to meet the melting look of his dying Saviour, if he felt not the overcoming power of that appeal—if he could not, like the apostle, say, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." "What things were gain to me, those I count loss for Christ."

In a world so intensely selfish, it was needful that the cross of the divine Redeemer, sacrificing himself to save transgressors, should stand in the centre of the plan of salvation : the first object which greets the eye of the convert, and the last which cheers the dying saint ; the source of the Christian's hope and strength through all his warfare, his joy on earth, and the anticipated theme of his everlasting song—that the great lesson of self-denying, all-consecrating benevolence may always be before the view—that with every look at the bleeding Author of salvation, may fall on the soul, with an eloquence too deep for words, the admonition, "Forasmuch as Christ hath

suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind ;" " he that saith he abideth in Christ, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked."

If God himself were in our circumstances, how would he measure his efforts for the good of men ? Receive the answer in the conduct of Christ, " God manifest in the flesh." He would sacrifice his riches and lay aside his glory ; he would consume all the energies of his earthly existence ; he would lay down his mortal life, to do them good. The first promise of the arch-deceiver was, " Ye shall be as gods"—ye shall become so by gratifying self. Christ has uttered the same promise, " Ye shall be partakers of the divine nature ;" but ye shall become so by denying self. " Gratify self, get, and ye shall be as gods," is Satan's lie. " Deny self, give, and ye shall be partakers of the divine nature," is Christ's truth. Satan has blinded mankind by this lie, so that they look for bliss and exaltation only by getting ; Christ overthrows this whole scheme, and teaches to find godlike bliss and exaltation by giving. This is godlike in man, to sacrifice self for the good of others. That was the highest elevation of human nature when it was lifted on the cross in the blood of its own agony for man's redemption ; then human nature was exalted to participate in the sublimest of all the displays of God's glory. And there is no elevation of man to the godlike, except as he is elevated to the

spirit of the cross. Who then can imagine that he has been made by regeneration a partaker of the divine nature, if he does not systematically devote of his choicest treasures, as God hath prospered him, for the good of men. And how little even that gift appears in the light of the cross; how little in contrast with the offerings of many who have laid down their lives for Christ's sake!

Thus systematic benevolence, instead of being an isolated and uninteresting topic, is seen to be a duty based on the very nature of piety, and enforced by its most affecting motives.

CHAPTER IV.

SUPERIOR EFFICIENCY OF SYSTEMATIC BE-
NEVOLENCE IN PROVIDING FUNDS FOR
BENEVOLENT ENTERPRISES.

SYSTEM always promotes efficiency. What would become of a man's worldly business, if he managed it without system, never-executing a plan or making an investment till solicited, and abandoning labor to the control of impulse or convenience ? And can he hope for any better results from a like disregard of system as a steward of God ? From such lack of order, what but embarrassment and failure can result to the enterprises of benevolence ? And what shall we say of those professors of Christ's religion who show so thorough an understanding of the necessity of system in worldly business, so utter a neglect of it in their contributions to benevolence : who are full of forethought and anxious calculation to realize the utmost of worldly acquisition ; deliberate and far-sighted in planning, cautious in executing, lynx-eyed to discern an opportunity of gain, exact to the last fraction in their accounts, but heedless and planless in all they do for charity ? Verily, "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light;" but "the children of light" show no lack of that wisdom, till they come to use property for the benefit of others than themselves.

Systematic benevolence will usually *dispose the giver to increase his contributions.* If a man gives without system, he will commonly give too little. Under the hallowed influences of the closet, let him estimate the claims of a world lying in wickedness, and the means of benevolence with which God has blessed him ; let him ponder what amount of charity would be acceptable to God and is demanded by the love of Christ ; and it will be strange if he is not convinced that he ought to increase his donations.

It is *more convenient* to set apart money for charity in frequent instalments. He who neglects to provide for his charities until the call for them is made, may find it inconvenient or impossible to raise at the time the one dollar, or the hundred dollars, or whatever sum it is his duty to give. But had he set apart a proportion from his earnings as they were received, he would not be incommoded by giving the sum required. Persons even in the most moderate circumstances, adopting the practice of systematic benevolence, are often surprised at the amount they can give without serious inconvenience.

System will enlarge the amount of money expended in beneficence *by being a barrier against the temptations of selfishness.* Many a man means to answer the calls of charity, but does not weekly or monthly set apart a specific sum as sacred to the Lord. Hence, when he sees some tempting article of luxury, having by him unappropriated the money

which should have been the Lord's, he buys it; when some tempting, though perhaps hazardous investment presents, having the money by him unappropriated, he invests it. Thus, through lack of system, many sums in the purses even of the benevolent are turned aside from the Lord's treasury. Self-interest has the advantage in being beforehand and having constant access to our hearts. Systematic charity helps to put the interest of Christ's cause on an equal footing.

System prevents yielding to second thoughts and withholding a purposed charity. Many a man, under the influence of a charity sermon, or of the teachings of conscience, or of the sight of distress, purposes in his heart to give a certain amount. As the subject first strikes his unbiassed judgment, such an amount seems not too large for the urgency of the case and his own means. But selfishness steps in and argues the point; it presents to the man his various wants, and pretty soon convinces him that the purposed sum is quite too much; then, forgetting Paul's injunction, "Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give," he gives little or nothing. But let a man have a fixed plan, in accordance with which he consecrates a fixed proportion to the Lord as regularly as he meets his notes when they fall due, or pays the expenses of his family, and the matter is settled. Here is a breastwork by God's grace impregnable against all the pleading of selfishness.

System increases the contributions *by making it more pleasant to give.* When a man has no system of charity, every call to give is unprovided for: if he comply, he must give from money which he was expecting to spend otherwise; it is so much taken from what he had reckoned his own; it seems so much dead loss. Hence, every donation chafes him; he is tempted to make it as small as possible; giving comes to be surrounded in his mind with unpleasant associations; he often looks back with regret, when he gives any thing, that he gave so much; and the call of charity becomes repulsive. But when he systematizes his charities and at stated times sets apart to benevolence a sum proportioned to his income, he no longer reckons that consecrated money as his own, or depends on it for the supply of any want. When the call of charity is heard, he is not obliged to take from what he had reckoned his own, but from what was already consecrated to the Lord. He can give both largely and cheerfully, and with no drawback from the blessedness of doing good.

System removes many common excuses of selfishness for "withholding more than is meet;" "I have lately given to another cause;" "I give as much as convenient;" "I have so many expenses;" "I give as much as others."

System increases the amount of charities by *forming habits of benevolence.* From earliest life, habits of gaining and using money for self have been

strengthening, and these consolidated habits have never been overcome. Even in the church the covetous use of property is too generally the habit, the benevolent use of it only an occasional act. And it is but dimly apprehended that the gospel requires it to be otherwise. Hence, the gifts of the church are exceedingly stinted. To remedy this evil, it is necessary to make the beneficent use of property the habit of the Christian's life, and thus turn to the advantage of Christ's cause that law of habit which has been all against it. To do this, there must be systematic benevolence. It were the extreme of folly to think of subduing these consolidated habits by desultory efforts—to send up now and then a platoon of light troops against these most massive and well-appointed fortifications of selfishness. We must approach them by well-concerted, persevering siege, till they fall into our hands and the guns are turned against the foe. Mere occasional, unsystematized donations scarcely make a perceptible impression in subduing selfish and forming benevolent habits. But when beneficence is systematized, the habit of doing good is formed, it moulds the whole life, it becomes second nature, and shows in all its results its efficacious vigor.

These considerations show the duty of Christian parents to train their children to the habit of systematically making a benevolent use of money.

One of the greatest difficulties in the way of obtaining an increase of funds, is found in another influ-

ence of this same law of habit. Of those who contribute regularly to particular causes, and thus have made an approach to system, a large portion are in the habit of giving from year to year about the same sum. The same twenty-five cents, the same dollar, or five dollars, stands from year to year against their names. The wants of benevolent enterprises increase, the property of the giver increases, but the contribution is stereotyped. The attempt to increase this amount breaks up their settled habits of thought and action. They have never thought that perhaps Christ requires a revision of their whole plan of benevolence. The adoption of the divine plan of frequent and proportionate appropriations would remove this difficulty.

It must be added, that systematic benevolence may be expected by God's blessing *to increase the giver's means of usefulness.* But this thought will be reserved for a more extended examination in another chapter.

In these various ways the scriptural system increases the funds of benevolence. Were it universally adopted by the churches, nothing but the experiment would show how immense would be the resulting increase. Without expense of collecting agencies, thousands in the churches who now give nothing, would begin to give; and a permanent and growing increase would be realized at once from those who have given occasionally. Then would the channels

of benevolence be like "the river of God which is full of water," and the waters of life issuing from the sanctuary with their healing power, would flow as the prophet saw in vision, ever swelling to the ends of the earth.

The following facts confirm the argument of this chapter. In 1844, Rev. Dr. Baird received, in two payments, thirty-eight dollars for some benevolent cause, from "one of the poor disciples of Jesus;" in acknowledging which he says, "The donor of it commenced giving, in a strictly systematic manner, the tenth part of all the money which he earned from the time of his conversion, and through God's blessing he has been enabled to give sums from time to time, to many, if not all the great enterprises for building up the kingdom of our Lord, varying from five to twenty-five dollars."

There is a farmer in one of the retired mountain towns of Massachusetts, who began business on his farm in 1818, being six hundred dollars in debt. He began with the determination to pay the debt in six years, in equal instalments, and to give all his net income, if any remained, above those instalments. The income of the first year, however, was expended in purchasing stock and other necessaries for his farm. In the six next years he paid off the debt, and having abandoned the intention of ever being any richer, he has ever since given his entire income, after supporting his family and thoroughly educating his six

children. During all this period he has lived with the strictest economy, and every thing pertaining to his house, table, dress, and equipage has been in the most simple style; and though he has twice been a member of the state senate, he conscientiously retains this simplicity in his mode of life. The farm is rocky and remote from the village, and his whole property, real and personal, would not exceed in value three thousand dollars. Yet sometimes he has been enabled to give from \$200 to \$300 in a year.

Let it be further considered in this connection, that *some feasible plan of enlarging the funds of benevolence* must be adopted, in order to realize the hopes of the churches from their missionary enterprises. This is apparent from the difficulty of sustaining these enterprises on their present scale. This deficiency is not owing to a want of means in the church. There is money in profusion for railroads, manufactories, any enterprise which promises a return to self. But where is the money for the Lord? "The great current of Christian property is as yet undiverted from its worldly channel. The scanty rills of charity which at present water the garden of the Lord, and the ingenuity and effort employed to bring them there, compared with the almost undiminished tide of selfish expenditure which still holds on its original course, remind one of the slender rivulets which the inhabitants of the East raise from a river by mechanical force, to water their

thirsty gardens; the mighty current meanwhile, without exhibiting any sensible diminution of its waters, sweeping on in its ample and ancient bed."

The aggregate of gifts from its members to the church was probably larger in the times of its greatest corruption than now. When it was believed that salvation might be bought by charity, wealth from the poor and the rich was lavished on churches and monasteries. But as, in the advance of the Reformation, charities with this motive have ceased, the churches have failed adequately to bring in the gifts of gratitude and love in their stead. It should make the ears of him that heareth it to tingle, that in this boasted age of progress, this nineteenth century, less is probably bestowed in charity by the Protestant churches to spread the true gospel through the world, than was given in the darkest ages to heap up the treasures of the church of Rome—that the love of Christ constrains to less valuable gifts than the arts and deceptions of a corrupt priesthood.

But the church is aiming *at the conversion of the world*. It is plain as sunlight that the world cannot be supplied with the means of grace without an immense enlargement of these operations. It was this contrast between the greatness of the enterprise which Christians profess to prosecute, and the littleness of the means which they devote to it, that wrung from the godly Abeel the exclamation respecting our missionary work, "If the great God could despise

his creatures, it would be despicable in his sight." There must be some way devised of realizing such enlargement, if the world is to be converted. Nor is the expectation of realizing it vain. The scriptural system of benevolence, generally adopted, would realize it without embarrassment to the church.

Let it also be considered, that when God *by his providence* proclaims, "Behold, I have set before you an open door," "he openeth, and no man shutteth" Then, if his church will enter, no obstacles or opposition can prevent her triumph. But if his people will not enter, presently the door is shut; and "he shutteth, and no man openeth." Ages may pass before, in the revolving cycles of his providence, he will open it again. And when thus shut, the costliest labors of his church are labors where God is not. One day God opens Canaan to the Israelites and urges them to go up, assuring them that the Anaks and the cities walled and great shall not retard them. They will not go. Next day they are all eagerness to go, but the door is shut; the pillar of cloud moves not—they go up only to perish before their foes. All history demonstrates this principle—demonstrates, that as we must follow God's movements in the circling seasons, would we reap in harvest; so, in the enterprises of benevolence, we must not fall behind the workings of his providence, would we achieve success. When God in his own spring-time drives the ploughshare through the nations, as with

such startling energy he of late has done, then must his people cast in the seed of truth; lest, neglecting it, they be compelled to fruitless toil till another spring-time returns. And when the time is come to set the fore-front of liberty and Christianity face to face with the hoary forms of Asiatic despotism and idolatry—when God reveals from the bowels of the earth the treasure which he had kept hid for this very juncture, and calls a population together from every land, and a nation is born in a day—then must his church bind the new-born state with the sweet influences of religion, and guide it to the advancement of piety in the earth, or it will lift its young and giant energies to smite her. God's providence never stands still. His church must move with it, if she would move effectively—if even she would avoid disaster. Hence, the necessity of adopting some mode of increasing promptly and efficiently the contributions of the church, so as to improve at once the precious opportunities which God opens.

It only remains to add, that *the prophecies foretell* that, in accomplishing the renovation of the world, an increase of appropriations to God's treasury, like what has been urged, will take place. "The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; the rich among the people shall entreat thy favor." "The wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. In that day shall there be upon the

bells of the horses, HOLINESS TO THE LORD." "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, to the Holy One of Israel." "I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord." Psalm 45 : 12 ; Zechariah 14 : 14, 20 ; Isaiah 60 : 9 ; Haggai 2 : 7, 8.

Thus the necessities of benevolent societies, the claims of a ruined world, the indications of Providence, and the predictions of the Bible, unite in demanding a great increase of benevolent contributions. These contributions, as now usually conducted, warrant no hope of realizing this increase. But the general adoption of the scriptural plan of frequent, systematic, and proportionate charities, will easily meet the demand.

CHAPTER V.

TENDENCY OF SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE
TO SECURE GOD'S BLESSING ON BUSINESS,
AND TO ENLARGE THE MEANS OF GIVING.

THIS is a subject of difficulty, yet of importance. There is danger of extravagant theories on the one hand, and on the other, of an unbelief which shuts God out of the daily business, and practically denies that "godliness has the promise of the life that now is."

It is not to be supposed that systematic benevolence will insure wealth. Wealth is, in God's judgment, too cheap a gift to be made the reward of his servants.

"Wealth on the vilest often is bestowed,
To show its vileness in the sight of God."

Multiplied as are God's warnings of the dangers attending wealth and the love of it, and his exhortations to set the affections above, it would be preposterous to suppose that he offers wealth as the reward of obedience—the gratification of cupidity as the reward for denying it. And he whose heart is on a better portion, whose longings for God and holiness forbid his finding satisfaction with any thing less than being with God and like him, would feel it the bitterest mockery to be turned off with the promise of riches as his reward.

But *there are various ways in which systematic*

beneficence tends to promote prosperity. It promotes *industry, energy, and enterprise.* The man has placed before himself a lofty object, suited to draw out all his energies. Henceforth he is no trifler, but an earnest man, sharing in the very sentiments of earth's purest and greatest ones. The grand idea of toiling to rescue the world from sin never mastered a man's soul without enlarging it, without stimulating all his faculties to unprecedented vigor, unfolding resources not imagined to be in him, and producing a concentration and perseverance of action, which cannot fail of realizing great results. An account was published some years ago of two shoemakers whose hearts had begun to glow with zeal for the salvation of men. The elder proposed to the younger to fit himself to preach, promising to support him by his labor. The proposal was accepted ; the promise was kept. The sublime purpose which had mastered that man's soul, and which surrounded his humble shop with a grandeur that never ennobled worldly greatness, gave him an energy and industry which enabled him to educate his companion, and to sustain him as he went out to preach to the destitute. When Christendom shall be full of missionary merchants, farmers, and mechanics, plying their business with the sublime aim of saving mankind from sin, no doubt it will be full of energy and industry unsurpassed.

Nor does the practice of scriptural beneficence stimulate the active powers alone. It promotes so

briety and economy. With an object so glorious in full possession of his soul, the man will have no time nor money for gratifying either vicious or luxurious desires. What others waste on dress, delicacies, equipage, and show, he will save for the Lord. He finds, in advancing the cause to which he is wedded, a gratification, compared with which the daintiest gratifications of selfishness are insipid.

Such a course *attracts the favor of the good*, wins their confidence, and if the man be poor, or a youthful beginner, their friendship gains him employment and otherwise promotes his interests. Besides, being thrown into company with such, he avoids the temptations of evil associates.

The habits of fidelity to his trust, of watchfulness, system, and exactness, which systematic benevolence forms, are the very habits to win for a young man respect, employment, and friends, and to lead to a judicious management of business through life.

Systematic benevolence tends to *restrain from hazardous adventures*. In prosperous times, when business is brisk and its returns speedy and large, men become discontented with slow and steady gains; they "make haste to be rich" and "fall into a snare;" they become inflated with a rash confidence; they rush into hazardous and ruinous adventures and speculations; or the ostentatious desire of displaying a large business, tempts to an enlargement beyond their means, and to consequent ruin. But when a

man has consecrated his business and its gains to the Lord, according to the scriptural law of benevolence, the feverish haste to be rich abates, and he is less tempted to dangerous speculations. Accustomed to do business with a sense of constant dependence on God, he is not puffed up with rash confidence by temporary prosperity. Accustomed to determine every enterprise with prayerful seeking God's will, and to regard property as sacred to his service, he will not thoughtlessly risk the Lord's money in hazardous adventures. Absorbed with the grand desire of aiding Christ's cause, he will be in little danger of ostentatious but unsafe expansion. Thus, "he that considereth the poor, shall be blessed upon the earth;" but "he that hasteth to be rich, considereth not that poverty shall come upon him."

It may be added that benevolence, in an important sense, *identifies the giver with Christ's interests*, and therefore may naturally be expected to secure Christ's blessing. The Saviour says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." He receives into his own bosom every favor to his church. Nor is there any surer ground of expecting the continued prosperity of an individual, a church, or a nation, than that by their abundant efforts for Christ's kingdom, they have identified themselves with his cause, and are likely to be carried on in its triumphs. The very boast of which it was said, "The Lord hath need

of him," had his way strewed with palms and garments, as it bore the Saviour to Jerusalem. The individual or the community that gives abundantly to advance religion, is the humble instrument of bearing the Saviour onward in his triumph. Of such it may reverently be said, "The Lord hath need of them;" and it may reasonably be expected that their way will be made prosperous before them.

In these several ways compliance with the scriptural law of benevolence may tend to temporal prosperity. There may be other ways known only to Him who holds all the invisible lines of influence in his hand.

If now we open the Bible, *we find it full of promises of temporal blessings to the benevolent.* A few must serve as specimens of the many. "Thou shalt surely give thy poor brother, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thy hand unto." Deut. 15 : 10. "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack." Prov. 28 : 27. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Prov. 3 : 9. "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." Prov. 11 : 25. "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added

unto you." Matt. 6 : 33. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." Luke 6 : 38. And in urging the Corinthians to give, Paul said, "He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." 2 Cor. 9 : 6.* To these special promises the benevolent are entitled. Resting on them, they may give with the expectation that the Lord will follow them with his blessing and protection. They will not fear want while they can hear God saying, "Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed." The same Being who made the Bible, orders the events of providence; and by what he does in the latter, he will not contradict what he says in the former. The principles of the Bible fit into all the windings of providence, like a key to all the wards of a lock for which it was made. Hence, however obscure the plan of Providence, and however uncertain what shall be on the morrow, he that conducts his business in conformity to all the rules of the Bible, may be sure that he has found the track of God's goings in the world, and that, if he continue to follow it step by step, it will guide him in the way of the divine blessing.

* See also Matt. 6 : 3, 4; Psa. 37 : 3; Prov. 11 : 24; 19 : 17; 22 : 9; 25 : 21; 24 : 11, 12; 13 : 7; Psa. 41 : 1, 2, 3; 112 : 5, 6, 9; Eccl. 11 : 1; Isa. 32 : 8; 58 : 6-11; Mal. 3 : 9-12; Dan 4 : 27; 2 Cor. 9 : 6, 7, 8, 11.

It will be seen from the foregoing reasoning, that it is not pretended that God's servants will be uniformly led in the way to worldly prosperity, and sinners visited with adversity in this life. The Bible makes no such representation. It teaches, that in this probation temporal benefits are scattered on the good and the evil, and refers us to the other world for the solution of this seeming confusion of right and wrong. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." It teaches that wicked men are prospered, but "the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." It teaches that God sometimes gives men "their request, but sends leanness into their souls." Their selfish wishes are gratified; but the gift comes, like the quails to the longing Israelites, attended by God's curse. Their riches increase; but they wrap the soul in the flames of covetousness, and "eat as it were fire." Their riches increase, but their "portion" is "in this life, and in the labor that they take under the sun." They are rich as Dives; yet soon will they be impoverished to beg "a drop of water to cool their tongues." Thus, inspiration explains these inequalities, and teaches, that "a little which a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked;" that Elijah, fed by unclean birds, but receiving his portion with God's smile, has no need to envy Ahab, cursed in the riches of a palace; that Lazarus the beggar,

with a home nowhere but in Abraham's bosom, is more blessed than Dives with a home nowhere but in his own luxurious palace. But at the same time it teaches, that he who humbly uses what God has given for the honor of the Giver, freely giving as he has freely received, may feel at peace in the thought, that all his business is blessed with his Father's smile.

Facts corroborate the foregoing sentiments. There are, indeed, comparatively few facts to furnish data for this argument. Yet the writer knows a considerable number of instances, in which a greater or less approach to scriptural benevolence, has been attended with unusual prosperity. Mr. Cobb, whose case has been mentioned, giving away a quarter, then half, and then three quarters of his income, not only became worth \$50,000 before the age of thirty-six, but gave besides more than \$40,000. Normand Smith, a saddler of Hartford, Connecticut, after practising for years an elevated system of benevolence, bequeathed in charity \$30,000. An anonymous writer says of himself, that he commenced business and prosecuted it in the usual way, till he lost \$900, which was all he was worth, and found himself in debt \$1,100. Being led by his trials, through God's grace, to trust, as he hoped, in Christ, he, at the age of forty, determined to take God's word for his guide in his business, and consecrated his earnings to the Lord. The first year he gave \$12. For eighteen

years, the amount has increased by about 25 per cent., and the last year he gave \$850 ; and he says, he did it easier than, during the first year, he paid the \$12. Besides, though with nothing but his hands to depend on when he began this course, he paid the whole debt of \$1,100 with interest, though it took him nine years to do it. Jacob went out from his father's home "with his staff," a poor man ; but at Bethel he vowed to give to God the tenth of all that God should bestow on him. Commencing thus, God blessed him, and in twenty years he returned with great riches.

We may also refer to the history of communities, in confirmation of the argument. When God issued his laws to the Jewish nation, he required, besides other liberal offerings, the tenth of all their income. We are not to suppose that every specific regulation for the Jews is the best for all nations. But in his dealings with the Jews, God meant to illustrate the principles on which, as to worldly affairs, he deals with all ; and this is one reason why their history is so minutely recorded. Thus, we find the law of tithes and offerings incorporated into their system as an exemplification of a universal principle in God's dealings with men. Many have pitied their unhappy lot in being compelled to give so much ; infidels have delighted in the objection that the wretched Jews were taxed so terribly for the support of religion. But the All-wise knew best what regulations

would harmonize with the course of his providence, and prescribed accordingly. And it ever proved that the nine tenths were worth more to them than the ten tenths. If ever, to increase their gains, they robbed God by hoarding the tenth, or by bringing the lame and the blind, disaster and loss were sure to follow. Say not this was all a miraculous interposition. Inspiration has only lifted the veil here from the workings of that providence which, unseen, untraced, is ever working in the affairs of men on the same principles and with the same aim. Say not, either, that the tithe was a positive institution. True; and as to its specific form it might, therefore, pass away, as it already has. But was there ever a positive institution of God not founded on something permanent, either in man's nature or God's scheme of providence and grace? Therefore was the law of the tithe founded on a principle as enduring as God's government on earth; and as the tithe was a blessing to the Jews, so regard to that principle will be always a blessing. We may find facts of the same import in modern times. Those churches which are most systematic and liberal in their contributions, are, without exception, the most prosperous. The same is true of nations. The history of New England is a striking instance. The first settlers were men who, in a great trial of affliction, and in deep poverty, abounded in the riches of their liberality, in sustaining schools, and ministers, and colleges, and

in laying deep a foundation for Christ's kingdom in this new world. It is not so fitly said that they contributed much, as that they offered all to Christ. And it is admitted that New England is, and in all her history has been preëminent in contributions and efforts to sustain every benevolent institution and enterprise. And where is the state or the nation which has ever possessed more of all the elements of true prosperity?

But an appeal to facts in the history of churches and communities must rest on imperfect data; for where is there one in which the efficiency of the scriptural law of benevolence, in developing and enlarging the resources of benevolence, has been fully put to the test?

In closing the argument, the thought may be suggested, that business, conducted as it is on the maxims of selfishness, when viewed *as a system* in its management and results, presents a picture of any thing rather than of permanent and healthy prosperity. The number of business men who fail once or oftener in the course of life; the numbers doing business who, should they pay up the as yet unpaid debts of their past lives, would strip themselves of all or a large part of their present property; the small proportion of those commencing mercantile life in cities, who, in the final winding up of their affairs, possess a comfortable independence; the fact that the property of those who die rich so often proves

a curse to their children, and that so many who are born rich, die poor ; the periodical recurrence of a “*crash*” in the commercial world ; the alternation of commercial prosperity and distress, which for generations has marked the history of business, realizing the inspired declaration, “ He hath swallowed down riches, and shall vomit them up again ; ” all these facts indicate any thing rather than a system of business which, as a whole—whatever may be true of individuals—receives the smile and blessing of God ; they present evidences of the divine displeasure such as might be expected to mark a selfish and ungodly system of business.

The discussion of this part of the subject will not have been in vain, if it help to remove the impression, that the rules of the gospel cannot be obeyed to the last jot and tittle in business, consistently with its successful management ; to rebuke the practical atheism which shuts God out of the details of daily life ; to make men’s hearts alive to the thought that the hand of God is on their ships, their merchandise, their cattle, and their shops ; that the claims of his law and the promises of his gospel are twined about all the acts and gettings of daily toil, not less than about their destiny for the life to come ; and that there is a reality here on earth in God’s smile on those who heed his claims, in his blight and curse on those who disregard them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ANTIDOTE OF COVETOUSNESS.

COVETOUSNESS is *deadly in its influence*. “Covetousness is idolatry.” It is inconsistent with piety. It is unmitigated rebellion against God. It is the object of God’s abhorrence and curse. It is classed by inspiration with fornication, drunkenness, theft, and extortion. It is “a temptation and a snare.” It is unsurpassed in its power to harden the heart and make it impervious to divine truth, to deaden all the religious sensibilities, and to resist the Spirit of God.

Covetousness is *prevalent*. The miser is one of the most universally abhorred of men. But plume not yourself that you are not covetous, because you are not a miser. Misers are the rarest specimens of this sin. Under other forms, it rankles everywhere. You are warned against a covetousness of a more respectable appearance. It may exist unsuspected. There may be covetousness in saving—parsimony under the “*alias*” of frugality, avarice, which never parts with money without a twinge. Oftener there is covetousness in getting—sometimes rapacity which scruples at no means if money may be gained; but much more generally the more respectable form of worldliness, keeping within the limits of honesty but swallowing all the energies in money-getting, deaden-

ing the benevolent susceptibilities, pinching and shrivelling the soul, living only to "buy and sell and get gain." Covetousness may be found even in connection with prodigality: greediness to acquire, to supply the extravagance of expense. It enslaves multitudes who are neither misers in hoarding, nor rapacious nor extortionate in getting. In its diversified forms it is one of the most prevalent of the vices, and often, under its various disguises, honored rather than condemned; as it is written, "The wicked blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth."

And there is *a liability to become covetous and to grow in covetousness*, to the existence and dangers of which the most of men seem not to be awake. In the prosecution of business, the love of money is freezing deeper and harder into their souls, and sealing up the springs of benevolence, and they know it not. One remarkable feature in the Saviour's teaching, is the frequency and earnestness with which he rebuked this sin, and pointed out the dangers of wordly acquisitions. He exposed it in the mansions of wealth and the circles of devotion, in the temple and in the street, in amiable inquirers after salvation, in pharisaical professors and vicious publicans. His warning was, "*Take heed and beware of covetousness. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*" The frequency and earnestness of his warnings contrast strangely with the eagerness and security with which his professed followers make haste to be rich, and

show that he saw a danger imminent and prevalent to which they are strangely blind. We do not vary from the spirit of his teachings in saying, that covetousness is the most common, the most insidious, and the most dangerous form of selfishness, the one which the most deadens the church, and is the most likely to crush it.

A little consideration will show the reality of this danger. "Money answereth all things." It is the representative of all commodities and the means of procuring them. It is natural that selfishness should fasten with peculiar strength on an acquisition which is the quintessence of all objects of desire. Besides, men are necessarily occupied during the most of their waking hours in earning money. To this end the thoughts must plan and the hands must toil. It is natural that what so occupies the man should gradually grow upon his mind; as a picture long gazed at intently, gradually fills the eye and enlarges to the dimensions of a real landscape. Especially must this result be expected, when the object which thus occupies the attention is one so pleasing to the selfish heart.

Besides, it is the nature of covetousness to grow by what it feeds on. Acquisitions increase its strength. In accordance with this well-known fact, the tendency of gainful business is to make the man more covetous.

These tendencies would be exceedingly strong, and

would need to be most diligently guarded against, under circumstances the most favorable to benevolence. But they are strengthened by outward circumstances.

There is a perverted public sentiment, a prevalent overvaluing of wealth, which silently sinks into the inmost soul—the scarcely acknowledged, yet controlling feeling, that wealth is the great good of human existence, which has incorporated itself into our very language; so that “to do well,” “to be successful,” “to accomplish much in life,” are phrases synonymous with making much money; “gain” is equivalent in our language to “filthy lucre” in God’s, and “goods” on our lips, is “the unrighteous mammon” on Christ’s; and a late writer has suggested the idea, that we speak of a man as being “*worth* much,” or “*worth* nothing,” as if all worth centred in money.

Worldliness, too, is the general character of the community, and a man finds few examples of scriptural benevolence, to show him his own selfishness by contrast, and to stimulate him to beneficence.

It is also an important circumstance, that the man has been trained from childhood under worldly influences; he has seen, perhaps, that whatever their professions, the chief actual anxiety of his parents concerning him has been to have him making money, and that to get him “a good situation,” and a “situation where he can make money,” and to “give him

a good start," and to "start him well in the career of acquiring property," mean in their minds about the same thing; and that in all his training for business, he is taught that "the main chance" is to make money, and in effect, that a man's life *does* consist in the abundance of the things that he posseseth. From childhood he has been indoctrinated by precept and example with the maxims of worldly policy, rather than the principles of benevolence—with the proverbs of "Poor Richard" respecting property, rather than the precepts of Jesus Christ.

All these circumstances tend to make wealth the central idea of the mind, to beget a materializing, deadening worldliness, to blight benevolence, and to make men as laborious and untiring in their business, and at the same time as callous to the interests of others, as so many iron steam-engines at their work. The pious and benevolent, who mingle constantly in business, know that the danger is imminent; they know that the maintenance of benevolence is opposed by silent but powerful influences, with which contact with the world every day surrounds them; and they tremble at their own liability to fall under the insidious but fatal power of covetousness. It is alarmingly easy for gold and silver to "canker," and the love of it to become an eating cancer on the soul. Hence, the multitudes whose benevolence never grows with their riches; who, when rich, give nothing like the proportion which they gave when poor; nay,

who give no more—who give less than they gave then. Hence is explained the admitted fact, that the greater part of the funds of benevolent associations comes from those of moderate means. Hence arises the general necessity of agents for collecting funds, and of the most pungent appeals for contributions. Have you ever considered seriously your own danger, and taken measures to guard against it? If not, your very thoughtlessness is presumptive evidence that you are already consuming with the love of money.

We see, then, that the path of worldly business is fraught with constant danger of a deadly evil. He who sets out on that path must climb a snow-capped mountain, where every step is along icy precipices, where the air chills to the heart the spiritual life, where every touch is upon nipping frost, and where the cold is perpetually producing a sleepiness almost resistless, but which, if indulged, will be the sleep of death. It is, then, a question of spiritual life or death, “How shall I do my necessary business, and escape covetousness—benumbing, paralyzing, deadly covetousness?” Alas, that Christians so seldom ask this question—so little take the tremendous meaning of Christ’s assertion, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon”—so little realize the danger which gives the thrilling emphasis to his warning, “**TAKE HEED AND BEWARE** of covetousness.”

He who knows what is in man, *has provided a safeguard against this danger.* He has, indeed, so

contrived the plan of salvation, that all the motives of the gospel, radiating as they do from the cross of the Son of God offering the stupendous sacrifice of himself, may bear directly against selfishness and tend to unfold self-sacrificing benevolence. But this is not all. He has enjoined systematic benevolence. This is God's remedy for covetousness. Infinite wisdom would not trust to unsystematized contributions, knowing that irregular efforts, sustained by no habit, no fixed time, no predetermined plan, giving way to every casual expenditure, would be but a slender barrier against a tendency so constant and powerful. God requires systematic and proportionate benevolence.

This plan is most beautifully fitted to this design. It accords with the laws of the human mind. There is no way of subduing one of our active propensities, but by refusing it indulgence, and so starving it to death. This the scheme of benevolence does to the sinful love of money. As fast as treasures are gained, it tears them from the gloating eye of covetousness to consecrate them to the Lord. It compels the man to give something from the wages of every day, from the profits of every enterprise and investment. Thus, drop by drop, it drains the lifeblood of that giant passion. And as the gains enlarge, God follows with his enlarging claims: should money come into the hands by thousands a year, there would be none left as food for covetousness, and the man would be necessitated to obey the command, "If riches increase,

set not your heart upon them." And there is no way of strengthening our active propensities but by exercising them. Therefore God's rule requires appropriations to charity every week, that benevolence may be strengthening itself by frequent exercise, and the disposition to give be consolidated by habit; it requires appropriations from all the earnings, that benevolence may preside in every department, and the heart, kept always open, may have no opportunity to contract; and it requires appropriations proportionate to the means, that whereas covetousness naturally grows by increasing acquisitions, this advantage may be wrested from it and given to benevolence. Thus the practice of this scheme becomes, with God's grace, like a fire-proof coat, in which the wearer may walk collectedly in the fiercest furnace of worldliness, and "not the smell of fire pass on him." It is impossible, according to the laws of the mind, to practise on this plan without continually weakening covetousness and strengthening benevolence; nay, the wonted influence of worldly pursuits is reversed: by pouring treasures into the lap avarice is starved, while even by the toils of money-getting benevolence is exercised and strengthened. Thus, by the very processes of business the power of benevolence goes on enlarging, till she stands up in her godlike majesty, the queen of the soul, and crushes beneath her heel the tyrant that had enslaved it.

We must not leave this part of the subject with-

out considering *its bearing on the community*, as we have already considered its bearing on the individual. Since the revival of commerce, the warlike spirit of chivalry, the love of martial glory and of conquest have been gradually giving place to the spirit of trade; this spirit has been gradually extending, till it has become, more than any other, the controlling influence in the world. This change constitutes an era in history, the causes, development, and effects of which are worthy of the most serious study. While it has produced many happy effects, as in mitigating the spirit of war, it is yet a problem what results it will finally work out—a problem which, alarming as already is the tendency of the public mind to covetousness, is one of the most momentous subjects now demanding the attention of philanthropists. There is an absorption of all interests and energies in money-getting, such as was never witnessed in the world before. Under this stimulus the country is filling with power-looms, steam-engines, and telegraphs, and energies and resources are employed in the prosecution of peaceful business, which would once have been more than enough to build the pyramids or to conquer the world. We acknowledge all the blessings of these inventions. But while every orator and every newspaper is dwelling on our commerce whitening every sea, our enterprise penetrating every country, on the miracle-working of the iron horse and the lightning

messenger, on our boundless territory and exhaustless resources ; and while a manufacturing city is laid out in an uninhabited spot, and built up in a year or two, as the early settlers would have built a frame house—we cannot blind ourselves to the alarming tendency in the public mind to regard these things as the sum total of all prosperity and the essentials of all blessedness ; nor to the fact that the energies which are so effective in aiding the acquisition of wealth, are scarcely less effective in stimulating the love of it. We cannot blind ourselves to the danger that the love of money will become more and more the ruling influence, absorbing into itself even that powerful passion, ambition ; swallowing up the love of office in the love of the salary ; overshadowing the enterprises of religion by the gigantic and spirit-stirring achievements of business ; drawing the church into the current of the world, and making its members undistinguishable in their pursuit of money from worldlings ; nullifying the influence of the means of grace, choking the word and making it unfruitful, and finally overwhelming in worldliness the piety of the church—the danger that the spirit of trade, not checked as it should be, by a contrary example from the good, will engulf the nation in a Dead sea of cupidity and luxury, or degenerate into that mercenary spirit which, reckless of honor and virtue, unscrupulous, untrusty, rapacious, despicable, has no principle but the Judas question, “ What will ye give

me?" no measure of good and evil but the profit and loss of dollars and cents.

Systematic benevolence is God's appointed safeguard against this danger. Practised generally and from the heart, it will introduce a loftier end of existence than the acquisition of property; will ennoble the pursuit of business by the spirit of love; will hold up a spiritual and sublime principle in antagonism to the materializing tendencies of the spirit of trade; will make civilization centre no longer on wealth, but on "charity that seeketh not her own," and thus will form it into a civilization pure, generous, heavenly, expressing in every aspect the godlike purpose of doing good; a civilization uncursed by want, ignorance, and crime, unblighted by oppression, unclouded by irreligion, because wherever were misery and degradation, millions of hearts will throb in pity, millions of hands be extended and purses be opened to relieve; a civilization which we see only in bright glimpses revealed in the prophecies of God.

From all these views of the relations of the subject to covetousness, it is plain that, to the church, systematic benevolence is a first duty of self-preservation. She has no walls and battlements but her own active benevolence, no army with banners but her sons and her daughters toiling to do good. If the church do not bless the world, she must be buried in it. If the piety of the church, as it makes its way through this wilderness, do not, like a fertilizing

stream, make all its banks “rejoice and blossom as the rose,” it must be swallowed up in it like a river lost in the desert sands which it fails to make fruitful. But let the scriptural law of charitable appropriations be adopted, and thus let benevolence keep pace with advancing business, following it into every new path, and laying her gentle hand on all its unfolding resources, then will covetousness wither amid increasing enterprise, and benevolence will unfold with an energy rivalling the energies of business, and making them her ministers. Then the enterprises of religion, no longer cast into the shade by the achievements of worldliness, will encircle the earth with a vastness and a vigor more amazing than the triumphs of commerce and manufactures, and the miracles of modern art.

We must gratefully notice *the remarkable coincidence of God's providence* in calling his children to great enterprises, and in opening the world for unlimited effort, at the very time when, from the unprecedented pressure of worldliness, there is unprecedented need of such counteraction to covetousness. Let Christians understand that it is God's mercy which multiplies the calls to give, to save them from the multiplied assaults of covetousness. Let them know that they neglect these calls at their peril—the peril of perishing in covetousness, of drowning in the “destruction and perdition” of them “that *will* be rich.”

CHAPTER VII.

SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE ESSENTIAL TO THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENTS.

ALMS-GIVING was thought so important in the ancient church, that it used to be called one of the wings of prayer; and the angel seems to have placed them side by side as means of access to God's favor, when he said to Cornelius, "Thy *prayers* and thine *alms* are come up for a memorial before God." So Christ said, "If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" plainly declaring the intimate connection, now so little appreciated, between high spiritual attainments and the right use of property. In the duty of systematic benevolence, then, may be found an essential requisite, seldom thought of, for securing that elevated tone of piety, the want of which is so much lamented.

It produces a more vigorous and elevated tone of piety *by giving to love that exercise which is essential to its health and growth.* Love is the essence of piety; and it is as preposterous to expect it to thrive without the habitual exercise of beneficence, as to expect the body to be healthy in perpetual inaction. Piety cannot thrive as an ineffectual sensibility, exhausting itself on its own emotions in the heart; but from the spiritual affections of the

inmost soul, it must issue, a transforming and controlling influence, pervading the whole life. It is a life-blood, which it is death to drive back on the heart ; which as the only condition of health, must flow through the whole being, and throb with living power in the remotest and minutest acts. This condition of spiritual health systematic benevolence is indispensable to secure ; and thus it is essential to meet one of the greatest wants of the churches, and to remove one of the greatest, though not one of the most noticed obstacles to higher attainments in the spiritual life.

It aids growth in grace *by promoting a constant intimacy with God.* It requires the will of God to be considered in every act of business, and links every expenditure with a regard to his glory. “The hand of God is recognized in our worldly affairs ; his presence is invited, so to speak, into the very heart of our prosperity, whence the world is most anxious to exclude him, invited to audit the account of our gains.” Thus it leads to “walk with God.”

It awakens *a deeper earnestness for the salvation of men*, and of course, a greater fervor in prayer. It is a law of our natures, that doing kind deeds to others strengthens our love for them more than receiving kind deeds from them. We love most those for whom we do most. Hence, the more we do for the welfare of men, the more we shall feel and pray for them. Thus systematic charity keeps the spirit

of prayer lively and the religious feelings tender and fresh. He who practises it will be likely to become an eminent Christian, entering with all his heart into every effort to do good, sympathizing in every feeling with the soul of Christ, and electric to every touch with his loving and self-sacrificing spirit.

It *concentrates the energies*, and thus favors spiritual growth. It prevents the division of purpose which is the great hinderance of success, fills, enlarges, and nerves the soul with the sublime purpose of doing good, and bending every power to that one object, enables us to say with Paul's earnestness, “*This one thing we do.*”

But its most important influence in promoting the spiritual growth, is in *counteracting the deadening influences of worldly business*. It has already been considered as the antidote for covetousness. In thus grappling directly with this mother sin, it withers the strength of some of the most powerful temptations, and exerts a varied and extensive influence in unfolding the whole Christian character in its beauty. It extracts the poison from worldly pursuits ; it counteracts their usual perniciousness ; and not only so, it compels them to become actually helpers to growth in piety, as the exercise and discipline of heavenly affection ; so that Christians may be

“Like ships in seas, while in, above the world,” and all the agitations of busy life be but the bounding billows which bear them on their appointed course.

It is a common impression that the highest exercise of religion is incompatible with the highest activity and enterprise in worldly business ; that as business increases, the activity of piety must decline ; and that revivals are not to be looked for in those periods when business is peculiarly urgent. This impression is wholly unscriptural. The Bible requires us at the same time to be “not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord”—a requirement, plainly, that fervor and activity in God’s service go hand in hand with fervor and activity in business. Nothing is plainer than that the whole system of precepts, promises, and warnings in the Bible is adapted to man amid the annoyances, temptations, and cares of every-day business. Should a man become a hermit for the better exercise of religion, he would find a large part of the Bible with no applicability to his circumstances. Besides, such a withdrawal is impossible, for necessity is on the most of men to spend their time in business. God requires them to be industrious in some useful calling. To suppose God requires a piety which it is impossible to exercise in its higher degrees in the midst of that business which his providence makes necessary and his law enjoins, is to charge God with unreasonable and inconsistent requirements.

But such an impression prevails. Not only so, but it is certain that business, as usually conducted, justifies it ; for it has tendencies almost sure to check

the growth of the Christian, so that the good feeling aroused in the closet or on the Sabbath is benumbed as by the shock of a torpedo; as soon as he takes his worldly affairs in hand; and it has tendencies to prevent the unconverted from attending to religion, and to harden them in hopeless inpenitence. Business occupies the time so that the prayer-meeting is neglected, and sometimes the family altar, the closet, and the word of God; so that the fatigue of excessive toil through the week causes slumber in the sanctuary, or is made an excuse for absence. Sometimes the pressure of business, or the fear that machinery will lose a few hours in the week, leads to flagrant, perhaps habitual profanation of God's day. Business occupies the thoughts, so that all the week long nothing else obtains a lodgment in the mind, and though the body be in God's house on the Sabbath, the thoughts are on the world; and thus, like one perishing in the water, the man of business scarcely gets his head above the worldliness which ingulfs him, to catch a breath of the pure air of heavenly life. And worse than all, his business seizes his heart; there is a fascination about it which draws to itself all his affections and energies. "He makes gold his hope, and says to the most fine gold, 'Thou art my confidence.'" In short, it is tending perpetually to make him at last a worldling, for whom the claims of benevolence and the schemes of philanthropy have lost their charm, who has no eye for the

glories of heaven, no ear for the terrors of hell ; who heeds his “piece of land,” his “merchandise,” his “five yoke of oxen,” more than the invitations of mercy and the attractions of the cross ; whose heart is in his purse, and his life circumscribed to his farm, his counting-room, or his shop ; who as to spiritual life is dead and buried in worldliness, and his prosperity is but the magnificent monument of his soul’s burial-place, on which all who weep his untimely ruin, may read with shuddering the inscription which God’s finger has engraved : “Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches.” “So is he that layeth up treasure *for himself, and is not rich toward God.*”

Systematic benevolence restrains this pernicious influence of business. But mere restraint is not all. It is not enough to ask how business is to be kept from injuring the church. Doing business is not necessarily serving mammon, therefore not necessarily the antagonist of serving God. It is dangerous for Christians to stand merely on the defensive here, and think merely to shield religion from the onslaught of worldliness. We must go further. The question must be, “How shall we bring business within the pale of religion, make it a part of religion, and an aid to its growth ? How make it help in exercising and strengthening piety, as really as does prayer ?” The Bible requires business to be thus identified with

God's service, and never will the church be saved from wasting worldliness and grow to her full stature in piety, till she carries the war into the enemy's territory, "overcomes the world," and makes it tributary to herself; and that, not merely by securing the silver and gold for her enterprises, but by securing in the very acts of worldly business a discipline of piety and an exercising and strengthening of grace. Business must occupy almost all the time of the most of God's children: how preposterous to expect them to make great attainments in piety if this business, like a poisoned atmosphere, is perpetually enfeebling their strength; if their religion is confined for its sources of nourishment to the Sabbath and the closet, and during almost their entire waking existence, is helplessly exposed to an ever-blighting agency from their own pursuits. They must bind their business on God's altar, or it will bind them on the altar of mammon.

The practical separation of business from religion, the belief that the former is necessarily antagonistic to the latter, and conducting it so as to make it so, are among the principal causes why the tone of piety is so low, and the mass of the church are but babes in Christ. Nor till this difficulty is removed have we a right to expect the church to "look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

Systematic benevolence is a most important and

an indispensable agency in making business a helper and not a foe to the religious growth. When a man acts on this principle, his place of business becomes a Bethel ; every transaction becomes like a renewal of his consecration to God ; money and bills and labor are associated with his obligations to his Master, and fragrant with the memory of the cross ; and like the attraction drawing every part of the earth and binding it to the sun, divine love fastens its attraction on every possession, on every toil, and every gain, and binds him with all that he has to God the centre of his whole life's orbit. Then he is intimate with God not less on the exchange or the farm, than in the closet. Then his whole course of life becomes a help and not a hinderance to his spiritual progress ; and like a healthy child, he grows steadily and unconsciously amid the ceaseless activity of life.

No:mand Smith, when roused to a more entire consecration to God, falling in with the common notion that a life of secular business is incompatible with a life of eminent usefulness and piety, seriously purposed to abandon it. But more scriptural views led him to continue in business, consecrating it to God. He put on record the "purpose to engage in my business, that I may serve God in it, and with the expectation of getting to give." His biographer says, "From that time it was observable by all who knew him, that he made rapid progress in religion. There

was a fervor and engagedness of spirit, a purity and elevation of aim, that could not be misunderstood or concealed. He rose towards heaven like the lark of the morning." From that time "he found no tendency in his worldly engagements to chill his piety, or to enchain his affections to the earth. His business became to him a means of grace, and helped him forward in the divine life, just as truly as reading the Scriptures and prayer."

When a similar habit shall become general in the church, one of the most important steps will have been taken to secure that elevation of piety for which as yet we sigh in vain ; and the law of love, now written in Christ's word, will be written on the hearts of his disciples and read by all the world in their lives.

Says President Edwards of alms-giving, "There is no external duty, by which persons will be so much in the way, not only of receiving temporal benefits, but also spiritual blessings, the influences of God's Spirit in the heart in divine discoveries and spiritual consolations." "That this is one likely means to obtain assurance, is evident from 1 John, 3 : 18, 19, 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.'" "If God's people in this land were once brought to abound in such deeds of love, nothing would have a greater tendency to bring

the God of love down from heaven to earth ; so amiable would be the sight in the eyes of our loving and exalted Redeemer, that it would soon as it were fetch him down from his throne in heaven, to set up his tabernacle with men on the earth and dwell with them.”

“ The late remarkable revival of religion in Saxony, which began by the labors of the famous professor Franke, and has now been carried on for above thirty years, and has spread its happy influences into many parts of the world, was begun and has been carried on by a wonderful practice in this duty.” Thoughts on the Revival, part 5, sect. 3.

CHAPTER VIII.

SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE INCREASES THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF THE CHURCH.

THE increase of spiritual power will be the necessary consequence of the increase of piety. And by promoting an increase of piety, systematic benevolence imparts an efficacy to the prayers and teachings of the church, an influence to her character, a success to her enterprises, a mightiness through God to the pulling down of strong holds, such as money cannot bestow.

Here, also, we may consider principally its influence in counteracting worldliness. No argument is oftener urged against religion than that founded on the alleged inconsistencies of its professors. The chief foundation for this plea, so far as it has any, is the conformity of Christians to the world in all the aims, the maxims, and the manner of getting and spending money, so that too commonly, Christians, away from their devotions, can scarcely be distinguished from the better sort of worldlings. Let the scriptural law of benevolence be usually obeyed; let the world behold Christians actuated by the sublime desire to do good in all their gettings and their expenditures, and consecrating spontaneously to the Lord as he hath prospered them; let it be seen, when men become Christians, by the change in their pursuit of

earthly treasure, that they have found a better portion, and now have their hearts and their treasure in heaven ; and the church will stand up before the world with a consistency and elevation of piety which will prove that gainsaying springs only from opposition to goodness—with a triumphant power which will compel the exclamation, “ God is in the midst of her ; she shall not be moved”—with a manifest and practical renunciation of the world, like that which in the apostles’ days compelled both Jews and Gentiles to confess the reality and feel the power of religion, and which, reappearing in the church, will go far towards restoring the like rapidity and glory to her conquests.

It would be ungrateful, indeed, not to acknowledge, among the striking characteristics of this age, the revival, in a degree, of the benevolent and missionary spirit of apostolic times. We hail it as an omen of good ; we have marked already its happy results ; we wait as “ they that watch for the morning,” for “ the glory that should follow.” But alas, how much in vain ! For the icebergs and snow-fields of the long winter still linger, and the piercing winds from them wither the plants of righteousness and keep back the buds of promise, and when we might be looking for the luxuriance of summer, behold the lingering, frost-bitten growth of a backward and chilling spring.

“ Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and

prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." We so constantly *spiritualize* this text, as to forget that its literal and proper application is to *contributions to the Lord's treasury*. Paying these fully is declared here to be the condition of God's great blessing. Let this challenge of the Most High be accepted. Let his sincerity in it be—as for generations past, by the church generally, it has not been—put to the test. Let his disciples "prove" him, by giving all that he requires, and see if, through its direct and indirect influence, it will not elevate the piety and enlarge the power and successes of the church—if spiritual stupidity will continue to be, for the larger portion of the time, the lamentation of the churches at home, and slow and limited success the history of benevolent operations abroad.

CHAPTER IX.

SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE PROMOTES
HAPPINESS.

IT is a privilege to give, and a reason for thankfulness to have the opportunity and the means. Money given to the Lord leaves a sweetness like the perfume of the alabaster-box of precious ointment, filling the soul long after the offering has been poured out. Those who have given most regularly and in the largest proportion, remember with the most joyous gratitude what God has enabled them to do. When David and his people had contributed immense treasures "willingly" to build the temple, we read that "the people rejoiced, and David the king also rejoiced with great joy. And David said, Our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But what am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." The first Christian converts, after "parting their goods to all men," "did eat their meat with gladness." Mr. Cobb said, "By the grace of God—*nothing else*—by the grace of God, I have been enabled to give more than \$40,000. *How good the Lord has been to me!*" Said a man in moderate circumstances, who was giving his whole net income, "I could not feel happy to spend the money on my-

self, while so much is to be done for the needy and the perishing. I could not enjoy myself if I should do it." At another time, when necessary extra expenses greatly diminished his charities for a time, he said, "I find it one of my greatest trials, that I cannot do more for the heathen."

Systematic benevolence promotes happiness *by its influence in subduing covetousness and strengthening benevolence.*

As we have already seen covetousness to be a principal hinderance to *the spiritual growth and the spiritual power* of the church, so now we find it a hinderance to *spiritual enjoyment*—nay, to human happiness in the broadest sense. And that same divine scheme which we have already seen to be essential, chiefly by its influence in subduing covetousness, to the growth of the church's piety and the advancement of its triumphs, we now see to be essential, in the same way, to happiness. This combined view of these arguments may show us at once the far-reaching and appalling dangers of covetousness, and the simplicity, efficacy, and unfailing adaptedness of God's scheme of prevention.

The covetous or selfish scheme of doing business is always tormenting. It is accompanied by great anxiety. He who does business on this system is perpetually anxious and chafed, feverish with an excitement and perturbation, which are avoided by him who calmly does business for the Lord, and asks only

what the Lord would have him do. “What shall I do for the hundred talents which I have given to the king of Israel?” is like the feverish questioning of the former. “The Lord is able to give thee much more than this,” is like the trustful reply of the latter. Normand Smith incidentally shows what a preservative he had found for unruffled calmness amid the annoyances of business, by the following entry in his diary: “I have forgotten and broken my resolutions to conduct all to the glory of God. This has been manifested in my being fretted at what I deemed untimely calls for settlement and for debts.” He seems to imply that so long as he adhered to his “resolutions,” fretting at the annoyances of business was not a thing to be expected. A man who for years has been doing business in one of our cities on the scriptural plan of benevolence, but who had previously done business otherwise, says of himself, that “the anxiety, the feverish excitement, and the impatience to get the news and the results of sales, or the results of their own business operations, which merchants, speculators, and others are continually burdened with, and at times almost to distraction, and from which there seems to be little or no prospect of relief, all such perturbations of mind, common to others, were once common to his experience; but he *now* seldom feels any thing of the kind; for he has learned in his Bible to ‘cast his burden on the Lord.’”

Besides, upon the covetous or selfish scheme of business, a man can never be satisfied. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase." This sentiment has been in the mouths of the wise from Solomon's day till now. Its truth must for ever cut off the covetous man from solid contentment. The more he acquires, the more he wants; and in the midst of the greatest acquisitions, he remains the very realization of those lean and ill-favored kine which devoured all that was fair and thriving before them, only to remain as lean, as ill-favored, and as voracious as ever. There has appeared in the newspapers a horrible story about a man who had an enormous tape-worm in his stomach: however much the man ate, it was devoured by the ugly reptile within, nourishing itself to greater bulk and voracity thereby, while the wretched man was wasting in the torment of perpetual starvation. Whether the story be true or false, it is a lively picture of covetousness. That is a worm in the soul, nourishing itself to greater strength and voracity by every acquisition, and wasting the soul in the agony of perpetual want. Relief, sought in vain by trying to satisfy, can come only by killing the devouring desire—by killing it speedily, before it proves itself "the worm that never dies."

It is related in the history of ancient Rome, that an immense chasm once opened in the midst of the

city. The superstitious Romans, to appease the god whose anger, they supposed, had opened the abyss, threw in the costliest garments and the richest treasures ; but in vain. At last one of the most distinguished nobles put on his richest armor, and mounting his steed leaped into the abyss, and it closed. Covetousness, in its insatiability, realizes this fable. It is an abyss yawning in the covetous man's path. He gathers treasures and casts into it, but it closes not. He toils harder, he gathers more and richer treasures and casts into it, but it closes not—it closes not, till the wretched man himself sinks into the widening chasm, and it shuts on him in the gulf of perdition for ever.

The very opposite is the result of love, which the adoption of God's scheme of charity cherishes. There is "comfort in love." In every act of relieving the wretched which it requires, is a present bliss, which partakes more of heavenly than of earthly joy. It produces trustful peace amid annoyances, perplexities, and calamities. It leads to satisfaction, even with little. In peace of conscience, the consciousness of doing good and of receiving God's smile, it imparts blessedness which gold selfishly used can never buy. It gives a lasting joy. Spend money on self, and how quick the gratification is gone. But the joy of beneficence grows and brightens in the remembrance. To know that by foregoing a selfish gratification I have relieved the misery of a fellow-

man—that for my gifts and self-denial there is less ignorance, less vice, less wretchedness in the world ; to know that I have helped to vindicate truth and right, and to establish the blessed reign of Jesus ; to hope that, by God's blessing on my charities, even one dark soul has been made acquainted with the Saviour and led to everlasting bliss ; what can thrill the soul with a richer, and more lasting joy ? And at the bed of death, when all earthly treasures are slipping from the grasp, and the memory of selfish gratifications, now past for ever, but imbibers the spirit, these memories of charities and sacrifices, offered for Christ's sake and by his grace, will stand like angels of mercy, fanning the soul with airs of heaven, and cheering it with an undying joy in the agonies of dissolution.

No language oftener meets a pastor's ear, than the complaint, "I do not enjoy religion." The churches present a painful contrast with the habitual happiness of the apostles, whose writings, though written usually in the depths of distresses, more than any human compositions overflow with a deep and exultant joy. But there is little apprehension of what is a prevalent cause of this lack of spiritual joy—the withholding of charity, and the consequent increase of worldliness and the stagnation of holy love. Happiness cannot be poured into the soul from without, like water into a cistern ; the water of life is not said to flow *into* a man, but to flow "*out of him.*" To

regain lost enjoyment, the Christian must increase the exertions and self-denial of love. Let him fill life full of efforts and sacrifices to do good, and he will fill it full of bliss. He can be blessed only in accordance with that law of the entire moral universe expressed in the comprehensive words of Christ, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Consider, now, *the universality of this law*. God is love. So far as any addition to his blessedness is concerned, God never received any thing. If, as many imagine, every thing given is just so much taken from the comfort of the giver, God would have lost more happiness than all his creatures, for he is always giving. But he is the most blessed of beings; and he is so, not so much in spite of his ceaseless beneficence, as by means of it. His infinitude of bliss is an eternal expression of the law, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Angels toil for others, happy in what to selfish hearts would be the humiliating and self-denying service of ministering to those immeasurably their inferiors in character and rank; waiting upon the very "babes in Christ" in this nursery for heaven.

In hell is neither giving, nor blessedness. Selfishness reigns alone.

Thus the spirit of Christ's self-sacrificing love is the spirit of all heaven, and the essence of its bliss. The spirit of selfishness is the spirit of hell, and the source of its misery. The principle of the cross,

“Give, give,” carried out to all its results, makes heaven. The principle of the worldling’s search for happiness, *“Get, get,”* carried out to all its results, makes hell.

The same law is discernible even in the confusion of probation on earth. The purest joy is found, not in halls of wealth, power, or gayety, nor yet in cottages where covetousness is always craving; but, whether in palace or hut, in the heart most completely filled, the life most completely controlled by self-sacrificing love. Even at the martyr’s stake are witnessed scenes of most ecstatic bliss, because there selfishness is most effectually crushed, because there love enfolds the martyr’s soul brighter and purer than the flames which enfold his body, and is the chariot of fire and horses of fire which bear him up to heaven.

Imagine a young lady surrounded with wealth and luxury, who, instead of living to strew around her blessings, is the spoiled child of indulgence, the victim of a selfishness that has always reigned unchecked. She passes her existence, full of fretfulness and discontent, in the vain attempt to satisfy desires which indulgence has made numerous and insatiable as an army of locusts, and which, in their devouring march through life, turn all the anticipations and opportunities of enjoyment opening invitingly before her, into unhappiness, and make the life of their victim to be always “like the garden of

Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness."

Contrast with this imaginary case an historical personage. She was one of the first missionary band that left our shores, when every step was uncertain and hazardous, and war redoubled the dangers of the untried undertaking. Arrived in Asia, she is driven from the country, tossed again upon the ocean, and buffeted with discomfort, sickness, and difficulty, till she dies. But her life was blessedness, and her death was peace. For the former, all outward circumstances combine to produce happiness; but selfishness makes her miserable. For the latter, all outward circumstances combined to bring discomfort; by her own self-consecrating act she had rushed into the midst of trials; but all the floods of affliction could not quench the fire of her love, nor drown the flame of joy which ever mounted from the altar of her consecrated heart. The former will vapor life away and die, and she and the silks that clothed her will decay and be forgotten together; but the memory of HARRIET NEWELL will always refresh the earth, and hope, and love, and self-denial will spring ever with new freshness from her sea-girt grave. Yes; better is it, greater is it, that, in doing good, we be like the sweet incense burned before the Lord, consumed ourselves while spreading a sweet savor of beneficence about us—better that we be like the sacred oil of the seven-branched candlestick, con-

sumed ourselves, while giving a holy light to others, than to gain for our own enjoyment all that selfishness ever won.

Paul and Silas, having "suffered the loss of all things," bloody with scourging, fastened painfully in the stocks in the inner prison, broke the silence of midnight with songs of joy. And love always sings: toiling, sacrificing, suffering, yet it sings. And in proportion as that love fills our hearts, controls our lives, subdues the tormenting covetings of selfishness, and makes it our "meat to do the will of Him that sent us," in that proportion will be the fulness and the continuity with which we shall join the song of love—that song which no prison walls nor stake of martyrdom can silence; which, ceaseless as the exhalations from the bosom of the earth, is going up everywhere from humble hearts toiling and suffering to do God's will—that irrepressible song, which, when death shall have broken down the bars of this mortality, shall burst into the shout of eternal and heavenly praise.

Thus has God made the universe according to that law, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Let any intelligent being cease to seek the good of others, and he ceases to be blessed himself. Let the sun cease to pour his beams abroad, let him gather his rays only into his own bosom, and he will not only cease to shine on others, but will become black and unseen himself in the universal night. So, while

any spirit that God has made lives not for itself, but for its Maker and its Maker's works, it shines above the brightness of the sun in glory. But when it begins to gather its efforts into itself and to pour its blessings only into its own bosom, that moment its glory goes out in night, and it becomes a part of "the blackness of darkness for ever."

In vain, then, do you look for happiness, while the business of life is not penetrated and controlled by benevolence. It were a contradiction and disordering of God's whole scheme of providence to permit it. And it were equally a contradiction of God's word; for as the word of God is true, they who "*will be rich*," and therefore neglect in their business the beneficence which God requires, must "*pierce themselves through with many sorrows*."

Hasten, then, thankfully to adopt God's plan for saving you from these many sorrows, and learn by your own experience that "*it is more blessed to give than to receive*."

Nor think that these sorrows are for this life only. God has lifted the veil from the awful future, and recorded the decision, "*No covetous man hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ*." "*Be not deceived*; neither thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards shall inherit the kingdom of God." If there be one cause more effectual than any other in satisfying men with false hopes, or in turning the attention quite away from religion, hardening the heart in impeni-

tence, and peopling the realms of woe, that cause is worldliness. If you value your immortal interests, if you have any just apprehension how many and powerful are the obstacles to your salvation, and how imminent your danger of being snared into a fatal negligence of your soul, it will be presumptuous trifling with your eternal welfare, if you adopt not the scriptural plan of subduing, by God's blessing, that worldliness which is the deadliest of all these opposing influences, and which the apostle so solemnly warns you is sure, if not subdued, to plunge you "into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

Such are the motives to systematic benevolence ; and such its vital and extensive connections with the Christian life and the prosperity of Christ's kingdom. And the force of these motives is enhanced by God's own revealed estimate of the importance of the duty of giving to relieve the wretched. There is something peculiarly interesting in the language of Christ, when guarding his disciples against selfish motives in alms-giving, and enjoining the precautions useful to secure an eye single to the glory of God. "Thy Father, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly." As if the Monarch of the universe felt a peculiar pleasure in the humble disciple whose aim is to honor him by his secret charities, and would bring

him before the assembled universe and with his own royal hand encircle his brow with the incorruptible crown. And verily, one "Well done, good and faithful servant," from the lips of the King of heaven, may well outweigh all human applause, all selfish gains. And as if to show the intensity of his interest, and the particularity with which he notices and rewards what is given and what is withheld, God has revealed from heaven that even so insignificant a gift as "a cup of cold water only," given with right motives, shall not lose its reward; and has transmitted to all generations the solemn record of his probation of the widow's farthing.

And the Saviour has invested the duty with an immeasurable sacredness, even with all the sacredness of love to him and regard to his sufferings; for he declares from the throne of judgment, that every gift, given with the pure desire to aid his church, he receives as given to aid himself; and every refusal to give, he regards as a refusal to minister to his own wants. He puts himself in the place of his church; he bares his bosom to receive every neglect of her in her necessities; he opens his heart to treasure up as a favor bestowed on himself, every favor bestowed on her. "Inasmuch as ye did it," or did it not, "to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it," or did it not, "to me."

Having thus invested these objects of charity with the sacredness of his own person, and, as it were,

linked the performance or neglect of the duty with every sensation of his own throbbing heart, he invests it with a new solemnity, and reveals in it a new importance, by declaring, that in the final judgment the duty of charity to the distressed will be selected as the key to the whole life and the test of the whole character. “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.”

Behold, then, in God’s own estimate of this duty, that we have not overrated its importance. Behold your hardihood, if you leave, unsystematized, to caprice and chance, a duty which is held so important in the solemn estimation of God, and is presented by the Judge himself, as the key and test of the character in the final decision. Behold with trembling your peril, lest, though you have even sat at Christ’s table, you be found at last with those who have not ministered to Christ.

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